HOSTAGE SITUATION CHECKLIST

Follow this guide when you're navigating a hostage situation to ensure you don't miss important tasks.

Hostage situations are unpredictable, high-stress events that can leave both trained and untrained professionals shaken. Timing is everything, and if you're unprepared for the logistics of responding to such an incident, you may find yourself at a disadvantage in an already challenging situation. Follow this checklist to guarantee nothing is missed when the unthinkable occurs.

1. Verify the situation with the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and Crisis Action Team (CAT).
2. Annotate details of the situation on the Accident and Incident Report.
3. Cancel all scheduled or current public affairs events.
4. Provide public affairs guidance to the commander within one hour of receiving notice of the event.
5. Contact higher headquarters (HHQ) for guidance as needed.
6. Inform the commander that additional personnel is needed to staff the PA office as needed.
7. Consider standing up the Media Operations Center (MOC) as needed per commander approval.
8. Direct team members to their applicable designated posts to perform their tasks.
   a. CAT PA Representative.
   b. EOC Representative.
   c. Public Affairs Operations Center Representative.
   d. MOC Representative.
   e. On-Scene PA Representative.
9. Receive the initial news release from EOC and disseminate to the appropriate publics.

10. Provide the initial DoD or Service position on the breaking news story to the press within one hour of the event.

11. Make sure all released information:
   a. Includes key information.
   b. Contains messages from the command post.
   c. Is free of errors.
   d. Contains no critical information or security, accuracy, policy or propriety (SAPP) violations.

12. Activate the Straight Talk Center or text messaging service within four hours of the incident via answering machine or internet. Provide base personnel with:
   a. An authoritative point of contact.
   b. Accurate information about the status of the accident.
   c. Command’s actions.

13. Document and respond to all media queries within eight hours.
   a. Clear all responses with the commander before release/utilize previously released info.
   b. Forward all queries to headquarters for logging.

14. Send a situation report (SITREP) to HHQ as warranted.

15. Continue reporting during emergency conditions; priority precedence as warranted.

16. Provide an after-action report (AAR) to HHQ within seven days after the end of the event containing:
   a. A chronology of PA actions.
b. Problems encountered.

c. Community relations aspects.

d. Lessons learned.

17. Ensure updated information is posted for the internal audience via the web and/or CC access channel.


19. Prepare a briefing card that includes a list of all questions news organizations and the public could ask about the incident. Each question should:

a. Include an answer with information that is known at the time.

b. Indicate whether and when the information can be released.

c. Include an explanation of why the information is not available or when it is expected to be available.

20. Revise briefing card as needed to reflect new or updated information about the incident.


22. Alert photographer on standby for documentation as requested.